

Whole Grain: Which Do You Choose?

Many food manufacturers are making products with whole grains. How do you choose? Could eating a whole wheat glazed donut be the same as eating brown rice? Is a sugary cereal such as Chocolate Lucky Charms okay if it is made with whole grains? Would eating a cookie really count as a whole grain serving? And what about crackers that have a lot of fat or sodium?

Should you buy? 3 steps to decide:

1. Is it a whole grain?
2. Is it heart healthy?
3. Is it low in calorie density?

1. Is it a whole grain?

Consumers have to do a little detective work to determine if a product is a whole grain.

- Look for ingredient list where a whole grain ingredient is listed first
- Excellent source of whole grain
- 100% whole grain
- “Made with whole grain” means at least half the grains used are whole grains – this is also the same as the 8g of whole grain stamp seen above.
- the notification defined “whole grain foods” as foods that contain 51 percent or more whole grain ingredient(s) by weight

Most people need to eat 3 servings (16g) of whole grains or about 48g per day – that is minimum – you can eat all of your grain servings as whole grains, too!

2. Is it heart healthy?

- Is it low in sodium?
- Is it low in saturated fat?
- Is it trans fat free?

Many whole grain foods claim “trans-fat free” or “cholesterol-free.” But unfortunately they don’t always tell the whole story. To be heart healthy, a food needs to be low in sodium, saturated fat and have zero trans fat.

Many processed grains are a significant source of sodium. Look for items that have 5% or less of the daily value for saturated fat and sodium and zero trans fat.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 1/4 cup (32 g/1.1 oz)
Servings Per Container: About 15

Amount per serving	
Calories 120	Calories from Fat 10
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 1g	2%
Saturated Fat 0.5g	3%
Trans fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 180mg	8%
Total Carbohydrate 28g	9%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 10g	
Protein 2g	
Vitamin A 10% Vitamin C 25%	
Calcium 0% Iron 25%	

3. Is it low in calorie density?

Fat and sugar increase calorie density. This is a big deal in today’s world where most consumers are trying to be conscious of their weight because of a sedentary lifestyle and the abundance of rich food.

Crackers with added fat, cereal with added sugar, sweets like donuts and cookies – they all have added fat and sugar that add a lot more calories than traditional cooked whole grains like oatmeal, brown rice and whole wheat pasta.

Compare calories per ounce:

Oatmeal	19
Whole wheat pasta	35
Brown rice	31
Donut, whole wheat	105
Cereal, whole grain	110
Crackers, whole grain	140

Comparing by the ounce or any other unit of weight allows you to compare calorie density of foods. The *top three*, that are low in calorie density, are the best choices for controlling your weight over the long term.